

MINT BUILDING AT PHILADELPHIA, PA.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY,

SUBMITTING

A reply to the resolution of the House asking for information as to the progress made in erecting a mint building at Philadelphia.

JANUARY 21, 1896.—Referred to the Committee on Appropriations and ordered to be printed.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D. C., January 18, 1896.

SIR: In response to the resolution passed by the House of Representatives on the 9th instant, requesting the Secretary of the Treasury to inform the House "what progress has been made under the act approved March 3, 1891, in the erection of a building at Philadelphia, Pa., for the use and accommodation of the United States mint, and the reason for the delay in the prosecution and completion of said building," I have the honor to say, that on the 7th of October, 1892, a letter was addressed by the Acting Secretary of the Treasury to the Attorney-General, informing him that the Department had selected the block of property surrounded by Seventh, Sansom, Sixth, and Walnut streets, in the city of Philadelphia, as a site for the proposed new mint building authorized by acts of Congress approved March 3, 1891, and August 5, 1892, and requesting that the necessary instructions be given to the United States attorney for the institution of proceedings for the condemnation of the property, in order that the United States might acquire a title thereto.

As soon as the necessary investigations could be made as to the ownership of the several parcels of land embraced in the above-described boundaries, the proceedings were commenced, and resulted in the valuation of the entire block at \$958,320, which very largely exceeded the amount of the appropriation made by Congress for the acquisition of the site, and, consequently, at the request of the Secretary of the Treasury, made April 13, 1893, the United States district attorney was instructed by the Attorney-General to discontinue the proceedings, which was done. The Department, however, continued its efforts to find a suitable site for the location of the building which could be pro-

cured within the appropriation made by Congress, and on the 15th of August, 1893, the city of Philadelphia, by an ordinance, offered to sell to the United States certain portions of the square bounded by Broad, Race, Cherry, and Juniper streets at the price of \$110,000, which was the value of the property as assessed for taxation; and by letter dated October 4, 1893, the Department informed the Attorney-General that it had selected said entire block of ground as a site for the proposed mint building, and requested that such instructions might be given as were necessary to have proceedings in condemnation instituted against it, except the parcels owned by the city of Philadelphia.

In accordance with this request the United States attorney for that district was instructed to institute proceedings on behalf of the United States against the whole property, except the parcels owned by the city of Philadelphia, and these proceedings were commenced. The awards made in these proceedings amounted in the aggregate to \$490,325, exclusive of the property belonging to the city and offered to the United States for \$110,000, as above stated.

On appeals by some of the owners this aggregate was increased to \$503,825, in addition to the \$110,000, leaving one appeal, that of Richard Wistar, still to be tried. The amount originally awarded for Mr. Wistar's property was \$240,000, and the appeal was prosecuted upon the ground that this was an undervaluation. Pending this appeal Mr. Wistar died, having made a will, which was contested by certain persons claiming to be his heirs at law.

In view of the complications arising from the appeal of Wistar, the contest over his will, and other difficulties, the Attorney-General was requested, on August 4, 1894, to abandon the proceedings in condemnation against said property, and the Department selected as a site for the mint the property at the corner of Sixth and Spring Garden streets, which, in consideration of the sum of \$305,000, was, on the 26th day of December, 1894, conveyed to the United States.

A contract has been made for the removal of all the buildings standing upon the site purchased, and that work is now being done.

General designs for the interior arrangement of the new building to be erected have been made, and sketch plans, estimates, etc., will be commenced and completed as soon as the inadequate force now authorized to be employed in the office of the Supervising Architect will permit.

Very respectfully, yours,

J. G. CARLISLE,
Secretary.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

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